

# Klamath Falls: Eco-Terrorism at Its Worst

## Part 3 of 3

Congressional Hearing Report by J.J. Johnson 06.19.01

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### THE POLITICAL BATTLEFIELD

So, what exactly will the politicians accomplish? The hearing was hosted by Representative Greg Walden (OR). The Klamath Basin is his home district. Flanking him were Rep. Richard Pombo and Wally Herger (both from CA), Doc Hastings (WA), Mike Simpson (ID), and Jim Gibbons (NV). No sense listing the fact that they are all Republicans. As many have learned from reading other media - no Democrats were present.

Richard Pombo of California chaired the meeting. He stated at the outset that the committee "wants to assist in any way." Pombo, along with the rest of the Republican chorus called for reform of the Endangered Species Act (ESA). "It is clear to me that the ESA has been misused for years by some of the advocacy groups to threaten the rights of private property owners," said Pombo. Here is where political rhetoric begins to separate itself from political reality.



Six Real American though powerless, at least they care.

A good reading of the Endangered Species Act, and how it has been used does much more than "threaten the rights of private property owners." In too many cases, it has removed those rights altogether. The ESA has a clause mandating that an economic impact study and a peer review must be submitted before any action is taken. It was learned that during the implementation of the action in the Klamath Basin, neither of these took place within given procedure. This action was simply done by the stroke of a pen on January 19th, 2001 by someone - somewhere at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

So, what can be amended to the Endangered Species Act?

More importantly, how would an amendment to any act concerning the environment (read: loosening government control) make it past an activist U.S. Senate now led by members of a political party that won't even show up to the hearings?

If from some miracle it made it past the Senate, The Bush Administration, who recently spent time in Florida vowing to protect wetlands, would have to sign it. These facts probably added to the depressed looks on the faces of many who left the hearings early.

There is frustration in Washington, D.C. from those who are concerned about the issue. Rep. Walden expressed that frustration. "It would take an initiative by the President, but he has to uphold the law until 'new science' comes in on the matter," Walden stated at the morning press conference. Walden rejected the notion that NAFTA (a bill championed by Republicans) has anything to do with the issue.



**This is not considered "wetlands"**

Jim Gibbons (R-NV) when asked why can't Bush take a more direct action on the matter, explained, "Gale Norton only has about 5 of her people sitting in the Interior Department. The remaining 150 or so are Clinton Appointees." Gibbons blames the U.S. Senate for holding up new appointments. Gibbons insists that the science is available to take action on the ruling. Clearly, according to the testimony of Sue Ellen Woodridge, Gale Norton's deputy Chief of Staff, whatever science is available that caused the initial action is...wrong.

More political reality: Just two days before the hearings, the Bush Administration, facing pressure from territorial activists, signed an executive order to end the military bombing exercises on Vieques Island in Puerto Rico. This was done in the face of opposition from Republican leaders in Congress. Political experts know this was merely a political move to satisfy the opposition. As of the time of this writing, there is no word on whether or not Bush will take similar action here - to satisfy those in his own political party. This discussion took place among several farmers during the hearings.



**In Memory - Of the American Dream**

Sierra Times did learn from talking to residents of the area that there seemed to be a unanimous consensus from urban to rural, farmers, ranchers, waitresses, even hotel clerks and some local law enforcement that the whole issue is not about sucker fish...

"This is nothing but a big land grab."

This was heard repeatedly both inside and outside the hearings. Thus, those in the political fight for the survival of the Klamath Basin are fighting an uphill battle since they are forced to fight against the ESA, and not openly fight against the 'land grab' itself. "We are battling the shadow of a beast, rather than the beast itself," said one rancher.

Andy Kerr, a Senior Counselor of the Oregon Natural Resource Council (ONRC) is advocating

the Federal Government pay the farmers \$4000 per acre to basically have them just leave. Let's do the math. For over 200,000 acres of land this would stick the federal government for a bill of \$800,000,000 if everyone sold the land. Kerr stated he did not want to touch on the causes of the crisis, because "It's marginal as farm land." But his proposal is worth \$800 million and the death of at least 430 species in the Klamath Refuge. Suddenly, the issue of "sucker fish" or "coho salmon" seem moot.

Despite the statements of Kerr and his minions, this is the first time in 120 years, the basin has been without water. Analysis of the whole matter leads one to agree with the residents who in fact live and work in the area - This is nothing but a big land grab.

As the sun sets on this saga, Kerr and his sidekicks like Wendel Wood also of the ONRC are finding it more difficult to live amongst those their promotions will destroy. Sierra Times has learned that Wood is being plagued by the typical western backlash. "He went to purchase some jewelry. Someone saw whose name was on the check and tore the check up," says one rancher who asked not to be named. "Word also has it he can't buy tires in the Klamath Area either."

During the Jarbidge road standoff in Elko County, Nevada, federal employees complained of not being served at restaurants, being mistreated at gas stations, hotels, and their children being distanced by other children. In short, an unspoken consensus to shun federal employees in the dispute over who owned the road. Experts believe this quiet action may become more evident in the Klamath Falls area as this crisis grows worse.

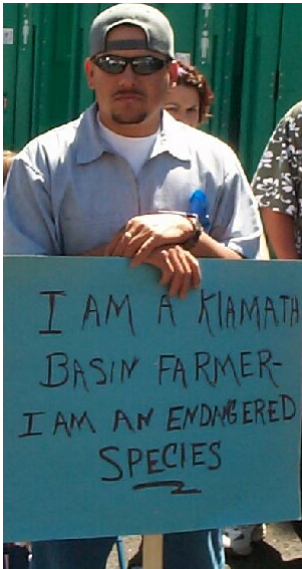
Currently, the Klamath residents are being hit with a fee for water that they are not even getting. Sharon Molder says residents are not giving up. "Farmers have been able to punch wells and get water to lots of people. They are truly digging in. The true American Spirit is alive and well here in the Basin."

As well it should be.

Sierra Times has learned that as the signs that line CA Hwy.139 and OR Hwy. 39 tell passersby of the plight of Klamath, a new movement is springing up by those wanting to keep their land, and in fact - their souls:

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One photo is worth a thousand words



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This is not about black helicopters. This is not about the right to keep and bear arms. This is not UN troops or the coming of Martial Law. And this is not some vague conspiracy theory. This is real. This is now. This is life or death for men, women and children, in a place called Klamath.

This is the Saga of Real America. The Klamath Basin will be another test for the West, as many others around the country are offering their support, and their help.

In a crisis situation that could be solved, with a pair of bolt cutters, and crowbar, and voltmeter, and a pair of jumper cables, these residents have chosen the peaceful, lawful approach.

Rachel Thomas is an Arizona Rancher, and monitor similar issues across the west. She stated that Klamath Falls is not alone: "There is the Bruneau Hot Springs Snail listed as endangered in Idaho. The species currently survives in approximately 89 out of 155 small, flowing geothermal springs and seeps along an approximately 6.9-kilometer (4.3-mile) reach of the Bruneau River and its tributary Hot Creek in southwestern Idaho," writes Thomas. In the June 17 edition of

the Seattle Times, the Idaho Trout was also hinted at being endangered.

"We have the Arkansas River Shiner on the Pecos in Kansas, Texas, and New Mexico. It's everywhere. Then we have Multi-species Conservation plans for areas like the Lower Colorado River," Thomas summarizes.

"I think that anywhere there is water, you will find one or more endangered species. And remember it is not only the site of the species, the frog or whatever, the rules then usually apply to the whole watershed."

"You get the picture. If there is water, the greens want to control it."

Terrorism is defined as: "The use (or threatened use) of force by a group or individual, to achieve political or social goals." The force in this case is a small dam on the north end of Klamath Falls, Oregon holding up 6 inches of water, or 10 percent of the water supply from two counties - two states in need. According to Dave Solem of the Klamath Irrigation District, this amount (and more) sits dormant in the Klamath Reservoir. The political and social goal: to remove the soul of America from the Klamath Basin.

"When they're done here, you're next," stated rancher Nancy Kandra. Those words stung as we drove away from the Kandra estate- begging for a drop of water - a glimmer of hope.

Empty canals lead to empty irrigation ditches, to empty fields, to empty hopes, to empty campaign coffers, to empty voting booths. All this because of "empty promises" from the Federal Government.

But these are Westerners. These are Americans - a special breed of mankind woven into the fabric of Americana. Eighty years of the blood, sweat and tears they've pumped into this land make them - part of the landscape itself.

...And the majority of this special breed in the Klamath Falls Upper Basin, and the surrounding areas, are **not for sale at any price.**

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